

Karl May

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Karl May	
	
	
Born	Karl Friedrich May 25 February 1842 Ernstthal, Kingdom of Saxony, German Confederation
Died	30 March 1912 (aged 70) Radebeul, Kingdom of Saxony, German Empire
Occupation	Writer, author
Genre	Western , travel fiction, German homeland novels, adventure novels
Website	
www.karl-may-gesellschaft.de	

Karl Friedrich May (/maɪ/ *MY*, German: [kaʁl ˈmaɪ] listen); 25 February 1842 – 30 March 1912) was a German author. He is best known for his 19th century novels of fictitious travels and adventures, set in the [American Old West](#) with [Winnetou](#) and [Old](#)

[Shatterhand](#) as main protagonists and in the [Orient](#) and [Middle East](#) with fictional characters [Kara Ben Nemsî](#) and [Hadschi Halef Omar](#).

May also wrote novels set in [Latin America](#), [China](#) and Germany, poetry, a play, and composed music; he was a proficient player of several musical instruments. Many of his works were [adapted for film](#), [theatre](#), [audio dramas](#) and [comics](#). Later in his career, May turned to philosophical and spiritual genres. He is one of the best-selling German writers of all time, with about 200,000,000 copies sold worldwide.



The house in which May was born

Early life^{[\[edit\]](#)}

May was the fifth child of a poor family of [weavers](#) in [Ernstthal](#), [Schönburgische Rezessherrschaften](#) (then part of the [Kingdom of Saxony](#)). He had 13 siblings, of whom nine died in infancy. His parents were Heinrich August May and Wilhelmine Christiane Weise. During his school years, he received instruction in music and [composition](#). At age twelve, May was making money at a [skittle alley](#), where he was exposed to rough language.^{[\[1\]](#)}

Delinquency^{[\[edit\]](#)}

In 1856, May commenced teacher training in [Waldenburg](#), but in 1859 was expelled for stealing six candles. After an appeal, he was allowed to continue in [Plauen](#). Shortly after graduation, when his roommate accused him of stealing a watch, May was jailed in [Chemnitz](#) for six weeks and his license to teach was permanently revoked. After this, May worked with little success as a private tutor, an author of tales, a composer and a public speaker. For four years, from 1865 to 1869, May was jailed in the workhouse at [Osterstein Castle](#), [Zwickau](#). With good behaviour, May became an administrator of the prison library, which gave him the chance to read widely. He made a list of the works he planned to write (*Repertorium C. May.*)

On his release, May continued his life of crime, impersonating various characters (policemen, doctors etc.) and spinning fantastic tales as a method of fraud. He was

arrested, but when he was transported to a crime scene during a judicial investigation, he escaped and fled to [Bohemia](#), where he was detained for vagrancy. For another four years, from 1870 to 1874, May was jailed in [Waldheim, Saxony](#). There he met a [Catholic Catechist](#), Johannes Kochta, who assisted May.^[2]

Career^[edit]

After his release in May 1874, May returned to his parents' home in Ernstthal and began to write. In November 1874, *Die Rose von Ernstthal* ("The Rose from Ernstthal") was published.^[3] May then became an editor in the publishing house of [Heinrich Gotthold Münchmeyer](#) in [Dresden](#). May managed entertainment papers such as *Schacht und Hütte* ("Mine and Mill") and continued to publish his own works such as *Geographische Predigten* ("Collected Travel Stories") (1876). May resigned in 1876^[3] and was employed by [Bruno Radelli](#) of Dresden.

In 1878, May became a [freelance writer](#). Once again, May was insolvent.^[3] In 1882, May returned to the employ of Münchmeyer and began the first of five large [colportage novels](#). One of these was *Das Waldröschen* (1882–1884). From 1879, May was also published in *Deutscher Hausschatz* ("German House Treasure"), a Catholic weekly journal from the [press of Friedrich Pustet](#) in [Regensburg](#). In 1880, May began the *Orient Cycle*, which ran, with interruption, until 1888. May was also published in the teenage boys' journal *Der Gute Kamerad* ("The Good Comrade") of [Wilhelm Spemann](#), [Stuttgart](#). In 1887, it published *Der Sohn des Bärenjägers* ("Son of the Bear Hunter"). In 1891 *Der Schatz im Silbersee* ("The Treasure of Silver Lake") was published. May published in other journals using pseudonyms. In all, he published over one hundred articles. In October 1888, May moved to Kötzschenbroda (a part of [Radebeul](#)) and in 1891 to *Villa Agnes* in Oberlößnitz. In 1891, [Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld](#) offered to print the *Deutscher Hausschatz* "Son of the Bear Hunter" stories as books. In 1892, the publication of *Carl May's Gesammelte Reiseromane* (*Collected Travel Accounts* or *Karl May's Gesammelte Reiseerzählungen*) brought financial security and recognition. May became deeply absorbed in the stories he wrote and the lives of his characters. Readers wrote to May, addressing him as the [protagonists](#) of his books. May conducted talking tours in Germany and Austria and allowed autographed cards to be printed and photos in costume to be taken. In December 1895, May moved to the Villa Shatterhand in Alt-Radebeul, which he purchased from the Ziller brothers.^[4]

Later career^[edit]



May and [Sascha Schneider](#), 1904



Tomb of Karl and Klara May

In 1899, May traveled to Egypt then [Sumatra](#) with his servant, Sejd Hassan. In 1900, he was joined by Klara and Richard Plöhn. The group returned to Radebeul in July 1900. May demonstrated some emotional instability during his travels.^[5]

[Hermann Cardauns](#) and [Rudolf Lebius](#) criticised May for his self-promotion with the Old Shatterhand legend. He was also reproached for his writing for the Catholic *Deutscher Hausschatz* and several [Marian calendars](#). There were also charges of unauthorised book publications and the use of an illegal doctoral degree. In 1902, May did receive a [Doctor honoris causa](#) from the Universitas Germana-Americana, Chicago for *Im Reiche des Silbernen Löwen* ("In the Realm of the Silver Lion.")^[6] In 1908, Karl and Klara May spent six weeks in North America. They traveled through [Albany, New York](#), [Buffalo, New York](#), the [Niagara Falls](#) and visited friends in [Lawrence, Massachusetts](#). May was inspired to write *Winnetou IV*.

However, on his return, May began work on complex [allegorical](#) texts. He considered the "question of mankind", [pacifism](#) and the raising of humans from evil to good. [Sascha Schneider](#) provided [symbolistic](#) covers for the Fehsenfeld edition. On 22 March 1912, May was invited by the Academic Society for Literature and Music in [Vienna](#) to present a lecture entitled *Empor ins Reich der Edelmenschen* ("Upward to the Realm of Noble Men"). There, he met pacifist and Nobel Laureate [Bertha von Suttner](#).

Death^[edit]

May died one week later in his own Villa Shatterhand on 30 March 1912.^[7] According to the register of deaths, the cause was [cardiac arrest](#), [acute bronchitis](#) and [asthma](#), but according to Ralf Harder from the Karl-May-Stiftung, May's death certificate does not include the cause of death.^[8] Scientists examining the remains of May in 2014 found excessive quantities of [lead](#) and other [heavy metals](#), and concluded that his death was probably due to a long-time [exposure to lead](#) in water as well as tobacco.^[9] May was buried in Radebeul East. His tomb was inspired by the [Temple of Athena Nike](#).^[8]

Personal life^[edit]

In 1880, he married Emma Pollmer. They divorced in 1903 and had no children. May married a second time to Klara Ploehn who was a widow at the time.

Works^[edit]

May used many pseudonyms, including "Capitan Ramon Diaz de la Escosura", "D. Jam", "Emma Pollmer", "Ernst von Linden", "Hobble-Frank", "Karl Hohenthal", "M. Gisela", "P. van der Löwen", "Prinz Muhamel Lautréamont" and "Richard Plöhn". Most pseudonymously or anonymously published works have been identified.

For the novels set in America, May created the characters of [Winnetou](#), the wise [chief](#) of the [Apaches](#), and [Old Shatterhand](#), Winnetou's white [blood brother](#). Another series of novels were set in the [Ottoman Empire](#). In these, the narrator-protagonist, [Kara Ben Nemsj](#), travels with his local guide and servant [Hadschi Halef Omar](#) through the [Sahara](#) desert to the [Near East](#), experiencing many exciting adventures.

May's writing developed from the anonymous [first-person observer-narrator](#) (for example *Der Gitano*, 1875) to a narrator with heroic skills and equipment, to a fully formed first-person narrator-hero. ^{[*[citation needed](#)*]}

With few exceptions, May had not visited the places he described, but he compensated successfully for his lack of direct experience through a combination of creativity, imagination, and documentary sources including maps, travel accounts and guidebooks, as well as anthropological and linguistic studies. The work of writers such as [James Fenimore Cooper](#), [Gabriel Ferry](#), [Friedrich Gerstäcker](#), [Balduin Möllhausen](#) and [Mayne Reid](#) served as his models. ^{[*[citation needed](#)*]}

Non-[dogmatic](#) Christian values play an important role in May's works. Some of the characters are described as being of German, particularly [Saxon](#), origins.

In a letter to a young Jew who intended to become a Christian after reading May's books, May advised him first to understand his own religion, which he described as holy and exalted, until he was experienced enough to choose. ^{[*[10](#)*]}

In his later works (after 1900) May left the adventure fiction genre to write [symbolic](#) novels with religious and pacifistic content. The change is best shown in *Im Reiche des silbernen Löwen*, where the first two parts are adventurous and the last two parts belong to the mature work. ^{[*[citation needed](#)*]}

Early work^{[*[edit](#)*]}

In his early work, May wrote in a variety of genres until he showed his proficiency in travel stories. ^{[*[11](#)*]} During his time as an editor, he published many of these works within the periodicals for which he was responsible.

- *The Book of Love* (1876, educational work)
- *Geographical Sermons* (1876, educational work)
- *The last journeys of the two Quitzows* (1877, unfinished)
- *Caught at Sea* (*Caught at Sea*, parts later revised for *Old Surehand II*) (1878)
- *Scepter and Hammer* (1880)
- *In the Far West* (reworked in *Old Firehand* (1875) and later in *Winnetou II*)(1879)
- *The Ranger* (reworked in "*Le Coureur de Bois*", a novel by Gabriel Ferry)

- *The Jewel Island* (1882) The shorter stories of the early work can be grouped as follows, although in some works genres overlap. Some of the shorter stories were later published in anthologies, for example, *Der Karawanenwürger und andere Erzählungen* (1894), *Humoresken und Erzählungen* (1902) and *Erzgebirgische Dorfgeschichten* (1903).

- [Adventure fiction](#) and early travel stories (for example, *Inn-nu-woh, der Indianerhåuptling*, 1875)
- [Crime fiction](#) (for example, *Wanda*, 1875)
- Historical fiction (for example, *Robert Surcouf*, 1882)
- Humorous stories (for example, *Die Fastnachtsnarren*, 1875)
- Series about "the Old Dessauer", [Leopold I, Prince of Anhalt-Dessau](#) (for example, *Pandur und Grenadier*, 1883)
- Stories of villages in the [Ore Mountains](#) (for example, *Die Rose von Ernstthal*, 1874 or 1875)
- Natural history works (for example, *Schätze und Schatzgräber*, 1875)
- Letters and poems (for example, *Meine einstige Grabinschrift*, 1872).

Colportage novels [\[edit\]](#)



Cover for *Waldröschen*

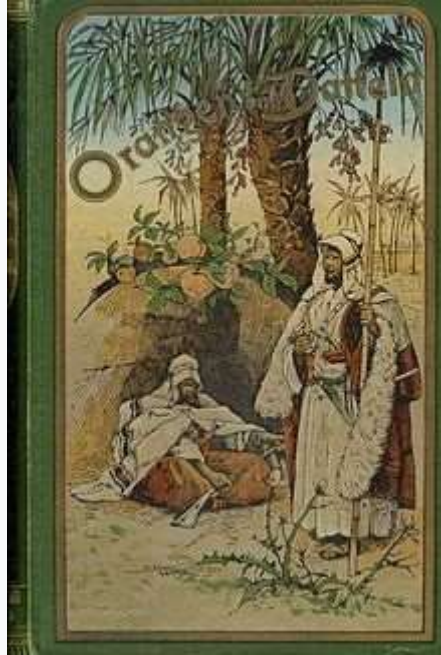
May wrote five large (many thousands of pages) [colportage](#) novels, which he published either anonymously or under pseudonyms between 1882 and 1888.

- • *The Forest Rose* (1882–1884, a part was later revised for *Old Surehand II*)
- • *The Uhlan's Love* (1883–1885)

- • *The Prodigal Son or The Prince of Misery* (1884–1886)
- • *German Hearts (German Heroes)* (1885–1888)
- • *The Way to Happiness* (1886–1888)

From 1900 to 1906, Münchmeyer's successor Adalbert Fischer published the first book editions. These were revised by third hand and published under May's real name instead of pseudonyms. This edition was not authorized by May and he tried to stop its publication.^[12]

Travel stories^[edit]



Cover of *Orangen und Datteln* by Fritz Bergen (1893)

Thirty-three volumes of *Carl May's Gesammelte Reiseromane*, (*Karl May's Gesammelte Reiseerzählungen*) were published from 1892 to 1910 by **Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld**. Most had been previously published in *Deutscher Hausschatz*, but some were new. The best known titles are the *Orient Cycle* (volumes 1–6) and the *Winnetou-Trilogy* (volumes 7–9). Beyond these shorter cycles, the works are troubled by chronological inconsistencies arising when original articles were revised for book editions.

1. *Through the Desert and the Harem* (1892, since 1895 titled *Through the Desert*) (translated as "*In the Desert*")
2. *Through Wild Kurdistan* (1892)
3. *From Baghdad to Stambul* (1892)
4. *In the Gorges of the Balkans* (1892)
5. *Through the Land of the Skipetars* (1892)
6. *The Schut* (1892)
7. *Winnetou I* (1893, also titled *Winnetou the Red Gentleman I*)

8. *Winnetou II* (1893, also titled *Winnetou the Red Gentleman II*)

9. *Winnetou III* (1893, also titled *Winnetou the Red Gentleman III*)

- *Oranges and Dates* (1893, an anthology)

- *On the Pacific* (1894, an anthology)

- *On the Rio de la Plata* (1894)

- *In the Cordilleras* (1894)

- *Old Surehand I* (1894)

- *Old Surehand II* (1895)

- *In the Land of the Mahdi I* (1896)

- *In the Land of Mahdi II* (1896)

- *In the Land of Mahdi III* (1896)

- *Old Surehand III* (1897)

- *Satan and Iscariot I* (1896)

- *Satan and Iscariot II* (1897)

- *Satan and Iscariot III* (1897)

- *On Stranger Paths* (1897, an anthology)

- *Christmas!* (1897)

- *In the kingdom of the silver lion I* (1898)

- *In the kingdom of the silver lion II* (1898)

- *Beyond* (1899) May's oeuvre includes some shorter travel stories that were not published within this series (for example, *Eine Befreiung* in *Die Rose von Kairwan*, 1894). After the founding of the Karl May Press in 1913, works in *Gesammelte Werke* were revised (sometimes extensively) and many received new titles. Texts (other than those from Fehsenfeld Press) were also added to the new series.

Stories for young readers[\[edit\]](#)



Cover of *Der blaurote Methusalem* by [Oskar Herrfurth](#)

These stories were written from 1887 to 1897 for the magazine *Der Gute Kamerad*. Most of the stories are set in the [Wild West](#), but Old Shatterhand is just a figure and not the first-person narrator as he is in the travel stories. The best-known volume is *Der Schatz im Silbersee*. In the broadest sense, the early works *Im fernen Westen* and *Der Waldläufer* belong in this category.

- *The Bear Hunter's Son* (1887, since 1890 within *Heroes of the West*)
- *The Spirit of the Llano estakata* (1888, since 1890 correctly titled as *The Spirit of the Llano estakado* within *Heroes of the West*)
- *Kong-Kheou, The Word of Honor* (1888/89, since 1892 titled *The Blue-Red Methuselah*)
- *The slave caravan* (1890)
- *The Treasure in Silver Lake* (1891)
- *The Legacy of the Inca* (1892)
- *The Oil Prince* (1894, since 1905 titled as *The Oil Prince*)
- *The Black Mustang* (1897)
- *Replies to letters from readers in The Good Comrade*.

Mature work^[edit]



Ardistan und Dschinnistan, 1909, cover by [Sascha Schneider](#) showing [Marah Durimeh](#)

May's mature work dates to 1900, after his travels to the East.^[13] Many of them were published by Fehsenfeld.

- *Heavenly Thoughts* (1900, poem collection)
- *In the kingdom of the silver lion III* (1902)
- *Erzgebirge village stories* (1903, anthology)
- *In the kingdom of the silver lion IV* (1903)
- *And peace on earth!* (1904)
- *Babel and the Bible* (1906, drama)
- *Ardistan and Jinnistan I* (1909)
- *Ardistan and Jinnistan II* (1909)
- *Winnetou IV* (1910)
- *My Life and Aspirations* (1910, autobiography)
- *Shamah* (1907) and other short stories.
- *Letters on Art* (1907) and other articles.
- "Karl May as Educator" and "The Truth About Karl May" or *The Opponents of Karl May in Their Own Light* (1902) and other legal proceedings.

Other works^[edit]

May was a member of the "Lyra" choir in about 1864 and composed musical works, including a version of [Ave Maria](#) and *Vergiss mich nicht* within *Ernste Klänge*, 1899.^[14]

During his last years, May lectured on his [philosophical](#) ideas.

- *Three questions of humanity: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?* (Lawrence, 1908)
- *Sitara, the land of the human soul* (Augsburg, 1909)
- *Up into the realm of noble people* (Vienna, 1912) Furthermore, there are posthumous publications of fragments of stories and dramas, lyrics, musical compositions, letters and the library catalog.

Reception^[edit]

Number of copies and translations^[edit]

According to an encyclopedia dedicated to May, he is the "most read writer of the German tongue". The total number of copies published is about 200 million, half of them in German.^[15]

May's first translated work is considered to have been the first half of the *Orient Cycle* into a French [daily](#) in 1881.^[16] Recently, it was discovered, and confirmed by Hans Dieter Steinmet (Karl May Museum) that [Croatian](#) writer [Nikola Tordinac](#) published a translation of May's novel *Tree card monte* in the magazine *Sriemski Hrvat* in 1880.^[17] Tordinac's translation became a part of the permanent exhibition of the Karl May Museum in 2017.^[17] Since that time, May's work has been translated into more than 30 languages, including [Latin](#) and [Esperanto](#). In the 1960s, [UNESCO](#) indicated that May was the most frequently translated German writer.^[15] His most popular translations are in [Bulgarian](#), [Czech](#), [Hungarian](#) and Dutch.^[16] Seabury Press, New York, began publishing English translations by Michael Shaw in 1977.^[18] In 2001, Nems Books Publishing Company, [Pierpont, South Dakota](#), was one of the first English publishing houses to produce the unabridged translations of May's *oeuvre*.

Influence^[edit]

May had a substantial influence on a number of well-known German-speaking people and on the German population itself.^[19] The popularity of his writing, and his (generally German) protagonists, are seen as having filled a lack in the German psyche, which had few popular heroes until the 19th century.^[20] His readers longed to escape from an industrialised, capitalist society, an escape which May offered.^[21] May "helped shape the collective German dream of feats far beyond middle-class bounds."^[20] and contributed to the [popular image of Native Americans in German-speaking countries](#), which has been described by many as racist and harmful.^[22]

The name *Winnetou* has an entry in the German dictionary, [Duden](#). The wider influence on the populace also surprised US occupation troops after World War II, who realised that thanks to May, "Cowboys and Indians" were familiar concepts to local children (though fantastic and removed from reality).^[19]

Many well-known German-speaking people used May's heroes as models in their childhood.^[23] [Albert Einstein](#) enjoyed May's books and said, "My whole adolescence stood under his sign. Indeed, even today, he has been dear to me in many a desperate hour..."^[20]

Influence on the Nazis^[edit]

[Adolf Hitler](#) was an admirer, who noted in *Mein Kampf* that the novels "overwhelmed" him as a boy, going as far as to ensure "a noticeable decline" in his school grades. According to an anonymous friend, Hitler attended the lecture given by May in Vienna in March 1912 and was enthusiastic about the event.^[24] Actually, the lecture was an appeal for peace, also heard by [Nobel Peace Prize](#) laureate [Bertha von Suttner](#). May died suddenly only ten days after the lecture, leaving the young Hitler deeply upset.^[25] [Claus Roxin](#) noted that he doubts the anonymous description, because Hitler had said much about May, but not that he had seen him.^[26] Hitler defended May against critics in the men's hostel where he lived in Vienna, as the evidence of May's earlier time in jail had come to light; although it was true, Hitler confessed that May had never visited the sites of his American adventure stories. This made him a greater writer in Hitler's view since it showed the author's powers of imagination.

Hitler later recommended the books to his generals and had special editions distributed to soldiers at the front, praising Winnetou as an example of "tactical finesse and circumspection",^[27] though some note that the latter claims of using the books as military guidance are not substantiated.^[20] However, as told by [Albert Speer](#), "when faced by seemingly hopeless situations, he [Hitler] would still reach for these stories," because "they gave him courage like works of philosophy for others or the Bible for elderly people."^[27] Hitler's admiration for May led the German writer [Klaus Mann](#) to accuse May of having been a form of "mentor" for Hitler.^[19] In his admiration, Hitler ignored May's Christian and humanitarian approach and views completely, not mentioning his relatively sympathetic description of Jews and other persons of non-Northern European ancestry.

The fate of Native Americans in the United States was used during the world wars for anti-American propaganda.^[28] The [National Socialists](#) in particular tried to use May's popularity and his work for their purposes.^[20]

Indianertümelei^[edit]

The popularity of May's books sparked a fascination in German popular culture with the Indians of North America that continues to this day. In 1985, the German scholar Hartmut Lutz invented the term *Deutsche Indianertümelei* ("German Indian Enthusiasm") for the phenomenon.^[29] The phrase *Indianertümelei* is a reference to the German term *Deuschtümelei* ("German Enthusiasm") which mockingly describes the phenomenon of celebrating in an excessively nationalistic and romanticized manner *Deushtum* ("Germanness").^[29] In the English-speaking world, the phenomenon of the German obsession with the First Nations of North America is known as "Indianthusiasm".^[29] In a 1999 speech delivered in the United States in English, Lutz declared:

For over two hundred years Germans have found *Indianer* so fascinating that even today an Indian iconography is used in advertising. The most popular image of the *Indianer* is provided by Karl May's fictional Apache chief Winnetou...Indian lore is profitable and marketable, as some Native Americans travelling in Germany may attest...There is a marked Indian presence in German everyday culture, even down to the linguistic level, where sentences like *ein Indianer weint nicht* (an Indian doesn't

cry), *ein Indianer kennt keinen Schmerz* (an Indian braves pain) or figures such as *der letzte Mohikaner* (the Last of the Mohicans) have become part of the everyday speech.^[30]

As part of the phenomenon of *Indianertümelei* a number of Western and Indian theme parks operate in Germany, the most popular of which are the Pullman City theme park outside of Munich and El Dorado theme park outside of Berlin.^[31] May's books also inspired hobbyist clubs, where Germans pretend to be cowboys or Indians, the first of which was the Cowboy Club founded in Munich in 1913.^[31] In 2019, it was estimated that between 40,000 and 100,000 Germans are involved in *Indianer* hobbyist clubs at any given moment.^[31] Interviewed in 2007, one member of an *Indianer* club stated: "Our camp is always in summer, in July for two weeks. During this time, we live in tipis, we wear only Indian clothes. We don't use technology and we try to follow Indian traditions. We have those [pretending to be] Lakota, Oglala, Blackfeet, Blood, Siksika, Pawnee... and we go on the warpath against each other day and night, anytime at all. In two weeks, every tribe can fight each other. We don't know when somebody will attack or when they will come to steal our horses. And the battles are always exciting, too. I really enjoy them".^[32]

Influence on other authors^[edit]

The German writer [Carl Zuckmayer](#) was intrigued by May's Apache chief and named his daughter *Maria Winnetou*.^[15] [Max von der Grün](#) said he read May as a young boy. When asked whether reading May's books had given him anything, he answered, "No. It took something away from me. The fear of bulky books, that is."^[33] [Heinz Werner Höber](#), the twofold [Glauser](#) prize winner, was a follower of May. He said, "When I was about 12 years old I wrote my first novel on Native Americans which was, of course, from the beginning to the end completely stolen from Karl May." He had pleaded with friends to get him to Radebeul "because Radebeul meant Karl May". There, he was deeply impressed by the museum and said, "My great fellow countryman from Hohenstein-Ernstthal and his immortal heroes have never left me ever since."^[34]

Legacy^[edit]

[Asteroid 15728 Karlmay](#) is named in May's honour.^[35]

Adaptations^[edit]

Main article: [Karl May film adaptations](#)

May's poem *Ave Maria* (1896) was set to music in at least 19 versions. Other poems, especially from the collection *Himmelsgedanken* were also set to music. [Carl Ball](#) wrote *Harp Clangs* for the drama *Babel und Bibel* for May. The Swiss composer [Othmar Schoeck](#) adapted *Der Schatz im Silbersee* for opera. May's concepts, such as Winnetou's death, inspired musical works.^[36]

The first stage adaptation of May's work was *Winnetou* (1919) by [Hermann Dimmler](#). Dimmler and [Ludwig Körner](#) made revised editions of the play. Different novel revisions have been played on outdoor stages since the 1940s. The [Karl May Festival in Bad Segeberg](#) has been held every summer since 1952 and in [Lennestadt-Elspe](#) since

1958. At some of these festivals, [Pierre Brice](#) has played Winnetou. Another festival has been conducted on a rock stage in [Rathen](#), in [Saxon Switzerland](#) near Radebeul in 1940 and then since 1984.^[37]

In 1920, May's friend [Marie Luise Droop](#), her husband [Adolf Droop](#) and the [Karl May Press](#) founded Ustade-Film, a [production company](#). Ustade-Film made three [silent movies](#) (*Auf den Trümmern des Paradieses*, *Die Todeskarawane* and *Die Teufelsanbeter*) after the *Orientcycle*. The company became bankrupt in 1921 and the films are lost.^[15] In 1936 a first [sound movie](#) *Durch die Wüste* was shown. *Die Sklavenkarawane* ^[de] (1958) and its sequel *Der Löwe von Babylon* ^[de] (1959) were the first colour movies.

From 1962 to 1968, a series of May movies were made.^[38] While most of the seventeen movies of this series were [Wild West movies](#) (beginning with *Der Schatz im Silbersee*), three were based on the *Orientcycle* and two on *Das Waldröschen*. Most of these movies were made separately by the two competitors [Horst Wendlandt](#) and [Artur Brauner](#). Several actors were employed, including [Lex Barker](#) (Old Shatterhand, Kara Ben Nemsî, Karl Sternau), [Pierre Brice](#) (Winnetou), [Gojko Mitić](#) (Winnetou), [Stewart Granger](#) (Old Surehand), [Milan Srdoč](#) (Old Wabble) and [Ralf Wolter](#) (Sam Hawkens, Hadschi Halef Omar, André Hasenpfeffer). The [film score](#) by [Martin Böttcher](#) and the landscape of [Yugoslavia](#) are associated with the movies. Other movies such as *Die Spur führt zum Silbersee* (1990) and TV productions such as *Das Buschgespenst* (1986) and the television series *Kara Ben Nemsî Effendi* (1973) were produced. The productions vary from the original written works.^[38]

In 2016, German RTL Television premiered three-part television movies based on Winnetou, directed by [Philipp Stölzl](#).^[39] In the part "Winnetou and Old Shatterhand", [Gojko Mitić](#), one of the actors who played Winnetou in the '60s movies, portrayed a character named Intschu Tschuna.

May's works (about 300) have been adapted for [audio dramas](#), particularly in the 1960s.^{[15][40]} The first, *Der Schatz im Silbersee*, was written by [Günther Bibo](#) in 1929.^[15] There are also Czech and Danish versions of the audio dramas.^[40] In 1988, *Der Schatz im Silbersee* was read by [Gert Westphal](#) and published as an [audiobook](#). *Wann sehe ich dich wieder, du lieber, lieber Winnetou?* (1995) is a compendium of Karl May texts read by [Hermann Wiedenroth](#).^[40]

In the 1950s [Croatian comic book artist](#) [Walter Neugebauer](#) finished his 1930s comic book adaptation of Karl May's stories.^[41] [Serbian](#) artist [Aleksandar Hecl](#) also drew one.^[42] In the 1960s and 1970s, May's works were adapted for German comics including an eight-issue series based on *Winnetou* and a further nine-issue series titled *Karl May* (1963–1965). The series was drawn by [Helmut Nickel](#) and [Harry Ehrh](#) and published by Walter Lehning Verlag. Belgian comics artist [Willy Vandersteen](#) created a whole series of comics based on May's stories, simply titled *Karl May* (1962–1977).^[43] Eighty-seven issues of *Karl May* were published by [Standaard Uitgeverij](#) from 1962 to 1987. Comics based on May's novels were also produced in [Czechoslovakia](#), Denmark, France, [Mexico](#), Spain and Sweden.^[44]

May's life has been the subject of screen works, novels and a stage play, including

- *Acquittal for Old Shatterhand* (1965, directed by Hans Heinrich)
- *Karl May* (1974, directed by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg)
- *Karl May* (1992, directed by. Klaus Überall, a television series in 8 episodes)
- *Swallow, my brave Mustang* (1980) by Erich Loest
- *Desire to become an Indian. How Franz Kafka met Karl May and still didn't end up in America* (1994) by Peter Henisch
- *Old Shatterhand in Moabit* (1994) by Walter Püschel
- *Karl May and the Weather Maker* (2001) by Jürgen Heinzerling
- *The Pocket Watch of the Other* by Willi Olbrich.

Copies, parodies, and sequels^[edit]

May was ^[copied] or ^[parodied] during his lifetime. Some wrote similar Wild West stories. Others, such as ^[Franz Treller], published under May's name.^[45] Novelizations of May's characters include

- *Hadschi Halef Omar* (2010) Jörg Kastner describes the first contact of the titular character with Kara Ben Nemsî.
- *In Mecca* (1923) Franz Kandolf, a sequel to *Am Jenseits* (Karl May's *Collected Works* volume 50).
- *"The Shade of the Shah-in-Shah"* (2006) Heinz Grill, an alternative to *In the realm of the silver lion III/IV*.
- *Winnetou's will* Jutta Laroche and Reinhard Marheinecke, a series of eight volumes as a sequel to *Winnetou IV*.
- *Manitu's Shoe* (2001) Michael Herbig, a parody on the Karl May films of the 1960s.

Karl May institutions^[edit]

Karl May Foundation^[edit]

In his will, May made his second wife, Klara, his sole heiress. He instructed that after her death all of his property and any future earnings from his work should go to a ^[foundation]. This foundation should support the education of the gifted poor including writers, journalists, and editors. One year after May's death, on 5 March 1913, Klara May established the "Karl May Foundation" ("Karl-May-Stiftung"). Contributions have been made since 1917. Klara and Karl May's estate went to the foundation. The foundation established the ^[Karl May Museum] to maintain the Villa Shatterhand, the estates, the collections and May's tomb.^{[46][47]} In 1960, the Karl May Foundation received the Karl May Press.^[47]

Karl May Press^[edit]

On 1 July 1913, Klara May, Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld (May's main publisher) and the ^[jurist] Euchar Albrecht Schmid established the "Foundation Press Fehsenfeld & Co." ("Stiftungs-Verlag Fehsenfeld & Co.") in Radebeul. In 1915, the name changed to "Karl May Press" ("Karl-May-Verlag" (KMV)). The KMV consolidated the rights to May's works from internal discord and from other publishers.^[48] Third-hand revisions of these texts were added to the series *Karl May's Gesammelte Reiseerzählungen*, which was renamed to *Karl May's Gesammelte Werke (und Briefe)*. The existing 33 volumes of the original series were also revised, some extensively. By 1945 there were 65 volumes. The press is exclusive to May's work and subsidiary literature. Besides the *Gesammelte Werke* (the classical "green volumes"), which have 91 volumes today, the press has a huge reprint programme.

The Karl May Press aims to rehabilitate May from literary criticism and to support the Karl May Foundation. In 1921, Fehsenfeld left and in 1960, the foundation fell to Klara May's estate, and thus the Press is owned by the Schmid family. In 1959, due to censorship in the ^[Soviet occupation zone] and ^[East Germany], the Press moved to ^[Bamberg] (Germany). In 1963, when copyright ended, the Press began commercialising May's works. After ^[German reunification], in 1996, the Press took a second office in Radebeul. The name "Karl May" is a ^[registered trade mark] of the "Karl May Verwaltungs- und Vertriebs-GmbH", which belongs to the Karl May Press.^[48]

Museums^[edit]

Radebeul^[edit]



May's Villa Shatterhand



The [Karl May Museum](#) is in the Villa Shatterhand in Radebeul and contains artifacts from May's life as well as from life on the [American frontier](#) and [Native American](#) life of that era.^[49] It was founded in 1928 by May's widow and an eccentric Austrian named [Ernst Tobis](#).^[50] When the [Nazis](#) took over Germany, they appropriated the museum and the image of May, and were especially focused on [swastikas](#) that appeared in some of the Native American artwork. Hitler Youth were encouraged to visit the museum and hear stories from Tobis.^[51] After World War II, the original museum remained in [East Germany](#) and a replica was built in [Bamberg](#) in [West Germany](#).^{[52]:73} From 1956 to 1984, the museum in Radebeul was called the "Indianer Museum", because May's books were suppressed by the East German government; its original name was restored in 1986.^[49] Around 2010, controversy arose over [scalps](#), some of them from Native Americans, that were in the museum's collection.^[50]

Hohenstein-Ernstthal[\[edit\]](#)

The "Karl May House" ("Karl-May-Haus") is the three-centuries-old [weaver house](#) where May was born. Since 12 March 1985, it has been a memorial and museum. It shows an original weaving room and non-German book editions. The garden has been arranged according to May's description in his memoirs.

Opposite the house is the International Karl May Heritage Center ("Karl-May-Begegnungsstätte"), which is used for events and special exhibitions. In [Hohenstein-Ernstthal](#), called "Karl May Home Town" since 1992, every May-related place has a [commemorative plaque](#). These places are connected by a "Karl May Path" ("Karl-May-Wanderweg"). Outside the city lies the "Karl May Cave" ("Karl-May-Höhle"), where May found shelter during his criminal times.^[53]

Societies[\[edit\]](#)

In the 1890s, there were Karl May clubs.^[54] Today, various entities focus on research about the author.^[55] These organisations exist in German-speaking regions, the Netherlands, Australia and [Indonesia](#). While such societies are responsible for the release of most May-related periodicals, for example, *Der Beobachter an der Elbe*, *Karl-May-Haus Information*, *Wiener Karl-May-Brief*, and *Karl May in Leipzig*, the magazine *Karl May & Co.* is published independently.

The "Karl May Society" (KMG), founded on 22 March 1969, is the largest organisation, with approximately 1800 members.^[56] The KMG publishes *Jahrbuch*, *Mitteilungen*, *Sonderhefte der Karl-May-Gesellschaft*, and *KMG-Nachrichten* and reprints. Since 2008 and in cooperation with the Karl May Foundation and the Karl May Press, the KMG has published the [critiqued edition](#) of "Karl Mays Werke". This project was initiated by [Hans Wollschläger](#) and Hermann Wiedenroth in 1987.^{[12][57]}

Karl Friedrich May (/ˈmaɪ/ *MY*, German: [ˈkaʁl ˈmaɪ] listen); 25 February 1842 – 30 March 1912) was a German author. He is best known for his 19th century novels of fictitious travels and adventures, set in the [American Old West](#) with [Winnetou](#) and [Old Shatterhand](#) as main protagonists and in the [Orient](#) and [Middle East](#) with fictional characters [Kara Ben Nemsj](#) and [Hadschi Halef Omar](#).

May also wrote novels set in [Latin America](#), [China](#) and Germany, poetry, a play, and composed music; he was a proficient player of several musical instruments. Many of his works were [adapted for film](#), [theatre](#), [audio dramas](#) and [comics](#). Later in his career, May turned to philosophical and spiritual genres. He is one of the best-selling German writers of all time, with about 200,000,000 copies sold worldwide.

Life and career^{[edit](#)}



The house in which May was born

Early life^{[edit](#)}

May was the fifth child of a poor family of [weavers](#) in [Ernstthal](#), [Schönburgische Rezessherrschaften](#) (then part of the [Kingdom of Saxony](#)). He had 13 siblings, of whom nine died in infancy. His parents were Heinrich August May and Wilhelmine Christiane Weise. During his school years, he received instruction in music and [composition](#). At age twelve, May was making money at a [skittle alley](#), where he was exposed to rough language.^[]

Delinquency^{[edit](#)}

In 1856, May commenced teacher training in [Waldenburg](#), but in 1859 was expelled for stealing six candles. After an appeal, he was allowed to continue in [Plauen](#). Shortly after graduation, when his roommate accused him of stealing a watch, May was jailed in [Chemnitz](#) for six weeks and his license to teach was permanently revoked. After this, May worked with little success as a private tutor, an author of tales, a composer and a public speaker. For four years, from 1865 to 1869, May was jailed in the workhouse at [Osterstein Castle](#), [Zwickau](#). With good behaviour, May became an administrator of the prison library, which gave him the chance to read widely. He made a list of the works he planned to write (*Repertorium C. May*.)

On his release, May continued his life of crime, impersonating various characters (policemen, doctors etc.) and spinning fantastic tales as a method of fraud. He was arrested, but when he was transported to a crime scene during a judicial investigation, he escaped and fled to [Bohemia](#), where

he was detained for vagrancy. For another four years, from 1870 to 1874, May was jailed in [Waldheim, Saxony](#). There he met a [Catholic Catechist](#), Johannes Kochta, who assisted May.^[2]

Early years as a writer^[edit]

After his release in May 1874, May returned to his parents' home in Ernstthal and began to write. In November 1874, *Die Rose von Ernstthal* ("The Rose from Ernstthal") was published.^[3] May then became an editor in the publishing house of [Heinrich Gotthold Münchmeyer](#) in [Dresden](#). May managed entertainment papers such as *Schacht und Hütte* ("Mine and Mill") and continued to publish his own works such as *Geographische Predigten* ("Collected Travel Stories") (1876). May resigned in 1876^[3] and was employed by [Bruno Radelli](#) of Dresden.

In 1878, May became a [freelance writer](#). In 1880, he married Emma Pollmer. Once again, May was insolvent.^[3] In 1882, May returned to the employ of Münchmeyer and began the first of five large [colportage novels](#). One of these was *Das Waldröschen* (1882–1884). From 1879, May was also published in *Deutscher Hausschatz* ("German House Treasure"), a Catholic weekly journal from the [press of Friedrich Pustet](#) in [Regensburg](#). In 1880, May began the *Orient Cycle*, which ran, with interruption, until 1888. May was also published in the teenage boys' journal *Der Gute Kamerad* ("The Good Comrade") of [Wilhelm Spemann](#), [Stuttgart](#). In 1887, it published *Der Sohn des Bärenjägers* ("Son of the Bear Hunter"). In 1891 *Der Schatz im Silbersee* ("The Treasure of Silver Lake") was published. May published in other journals using pseudonyms. In all, he published over one hundred articles. In October 1888, May moved to Kötzschenbroda (a part of [Radebeul](#)) and in 1891 to *Villa Agnes* in Oberlößnitz. In 1891, [Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld](#) offered to print the *Deutscher Hausschatz* "Son of the Bear Hunter" stories as books. In 1892, the publication of *Carl May's Gesammelte Reiseromane* (*Collected Travel Accounts* or *Karl May's Gesammelte Reiseerzählungen*) brought financial security and recognition. May became deeply absorbed in the stories he wrote and the lives of his characters. Readers wrote to May, addressing him as the [protagonists](#) of his books. May conducted talking tours in Germany and Austria and allowed autographed cards to be printed and photos in costume to be taken. In December 1895, May moved to the Villa Shatterhand in Alt-Radebeul, which he purchased from the Ziller brothers.^[4]

Later career and death^[edit]



May and [Sascha Schneider](#), 1904



Tomb of Karl and Klara May

In 1899, May traveled to Egypt then [Sumatra](#) with his servant, Sejd Hassan. In 1900, he was joined by Klara and Richard Plöhn. The group returned to Radebeul in July 1900. May demonstrated some emotional instability during his travels.^[5]

[Hermann Cardauns](#) and [Rudolf Lebius](#) criticised May for his self-promotion with the Old Shatterhand legend. He was also reproached for his writing for the Catholic *Deutscher Hausschatz* and several [Marian calendars](#). There were also charges of unauthorised book publications and the use of an illegal doctoral degree. In 1902, May did receive a [Doctor honoris causa](#) from the Universitas Germana-Americana, Chicago for *Im Reiche des Silbernen Löwen* ("In the Realm of the Silver Lion.")^[6] In 1908, Karl and Klara May spent six weeks in North America. They traveled through [Albany, New York](#), [Buffalo, New York](#), the [Niagara Falls](#) and visited friends in [Lawrence, Massachusetts](#). May was inspired to write *Winnetou IV*.

However, on his return, May began work on complex [allegorical](#) texts. He considered the "question of mankind", [pacifism](#) and the raising of humans from evil to good. [Sascha Schneider](#) provided [symbolistic](#) covers for the Fehsenfeld edition. On 22 March 1912, May was invited by the Academic Society for Literature and Music in [Vienna](#) to present a lecture entitled *Empor ins Reich der Edelmenschen* ("Upward to the Realm of Noble Men"). There, he met [Bertha von Suttner](#).

May died one week later in his own Villa Shatterhand on 30 March 1912.^[7] According to the register of deaths, the cause was [cardiac arrest](#), [acute bronchitis](#) and [asthma](#), but according to Ralf Harder from the Karl-May-Stiftung, May's death certificate does not include the cause of death.^[8] Scientists examining the remains of May in 2014 found excessive quantities of [lead](#) and other [heavy metals](#), and concluded that his death was probably due to a long-time [exposure to lead](#) in water as well as tobacco.^[9] May was buried in Radebeul East. His tomb was inspired by the [Temple of Athena Nike](#).^[8]

Works^[edit]

Introduction^[edit]

May used many pseudonyms, including "Capitan Ramon Diaz de la Escosura", "D. Jam", "Emma Pollmer", "Ernst von Linden", "Hobble-Frank", "Karl Hohenthal", "M. Gisela", "P. van der Löwen", "Prinz Muhamel Lautréamont" and "Richard Plöhn". Most pseudonymously or anonymously published works have been identified.

For the novels set in America, May created the characters of [Winnetou](#), the wise [chief](#) of the [Apaches](#), and [Old Shatterhand](#), Winnetou's white [blood brother](#). Another series of novels were set in the [Ottoman Empire](#). In these, the narrator-protagonist, [Kara Ben Nemsj](#), travels with his local guide and servant [Hadschi Halef Omar](#) through the [Sahara](#) desert to the [Near East](#), experiencing many exciting adventures.

May's writing developed from the anonymous [first-person observer-narrator](#) (for example *Der Gitano*, 1875) to a narrator with heroic skills and equipment, to a fully formed first-person narrator-hero.^[citation needed]

With few exceptions, May had not visited the places he described, but he compensated successfully for his lack of direct experience through a combination of creativity, imagination, and documentary sources including maps, travel accounts and guidebooks, as well as anthropological and linguistic studies. The work of writers such as [James Fenimore Cooper](#), [Gabriel Ferry](#), [Friedrich Gerstäcker](#), [Balduin Möllhausen](#) and [Mayne Reid](#) served as his models.^[citation needed]

Non-[dogmatic](#) Christian values play an important role in May's works. Some of the characters are described as being of German, particularly [Saxon](#), origins.

In a letter to a young Jew who intended to become a Christian after reading May's books, May advised him first to understand his own religion, which he described as holy and exalted, until he was experienced enough to choose.^[10]

In his later works (after 1900) May left the adventure fiction genre to write [symbolic](#) novels with religious and pacifistic content. The change is best shown in *Im Reiche des silbernen Löwen*, where the first two parts are adventurous and the last two parts belong to the mature work.

Early work

In his early work, May wrote in a variety of genres until he showed his proficiency in travel stories.^[11] During his time as an editor, he published many of these works within the periodicals for which he was responsible.

The Book of Love (1876, educational work)

Geographical Sermons (1876, educational work)

The Two Quitzows Last Voyages (1877, unfinished)

Caught at Sea (Caught at Sea, parts later revised for Old Surehand II) (1878)

Scepter and Hammer (1880)

In the Far West (reworked in Old Firehand (1875) and later in Winnetou II)(1879)

The Ranger (reworked in "Le Coureur de Bois", a novel by Gabriel Ferry)

The Jewel Island (1882)

The shorter stories of the early work can be grouped as follows, although in some works genres overlap. Some of the shorter stories were later published in anthologies, for example, *The Caravan Strangler and Other Stories* (1894), *Humoresques and Stories* (1902) and *Erzgebirge Village Stories* (1903).

Adventure fiction and early travel stories (for example, *Inn-nu-woh, the Indian chief*, 1875)

Crime fiction (for example, *Wanda*, 1875)

Historical fiction (for example, *Robert Surcouf*, 1882)

Humorous stories (for example, *Die Fastnachtsnarren*, 1875)

Series about "the Old Dessauer", Leopold I, Prince of Anhalt-Dessau (for example, *Pandur und Grenadier*, 1883)

Stories of villages in the Ore Mountains (for example, *Die Rose von Ernstthal*, 1874 or 1875)

Natural history works (for example, Treasures and treasure diggers, 1875)

Letters and poems (for example, Meine former epitaph, 1872).

Colportage novels

Cover for Waldröschen

May wrote five large (many thousands of pages) colportage novels, which he published either anonymously or under pseudonyms between 1882 and 1888.

The Forest Rose (1882–1884, a part was later revised for Old Surehand II)

The Uhlan's Love (1883–1885)

The Prodigal Son or The Prince of Sorrows (1884–1886)

German Hearts (German Heroes) (1885–1888)

The Path to Happiness (1886–1888)

From 1900 to 1906, Münchmeyer's successor Adalbert Fischer published the first book editions. These were revised by third hand and published under May's real name instead of pseudonyms. This edition was not authorized by May and he tried to stop its publication

Travel stories

Cover of Orangen und Datteln by Fritz Bergen (1893)

Thirty-three volumes of Carl May's Gesammelte Reiseromane, (Karl May's Gesammelte Reiseerzählungen) were published from 1892 to 1910 by Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld. Most had been previously published in Deutscher Hausschatz, but some were new. The best known titles are the Orient Cycle (volumes 1–6) and the Winnetou-Trilogy (volumes 7–9). Beyond these shorter cycles, the works are troubled by chronological inconsistencies arising when original articles were revised for book editions.

Through the Desert and the Harem (1892, since 1895 titled Through the Desert) (translated as "In the Desert")

Through Wild Kurdistan (1892)

From Baghdad to Stambul (1892)

In the Gorges of the Balkans (1892)

Through the Land of the Skipetars (1892)

The Schut (1892)

Winnetou I (1893, also titled Winnetou the Red Gentleman I)

Winnetou II (1893, also titled Winnetou the Red Gentleman II)

Winnetou III (1893, also titled Winnetou the Red Gentleman III)

Oranges and Dates (1893, an anthology)

On the Pacific (1894, an anthology)

On the Rio de la Plata (1894)

In the Cordilleras (1894)

Old Surehand I (1894)

Old Surehand II (1895)

In the Land of the Mahdi I (1896)

In the Land of Mahdi II (1896)

In the Land of Mahdi III (1896)

Old Surehand III (1897)

Satan and Iscariot I (1896)

Satan and Iscariot II (1897)

Satan and Iscariot III (1897)

On Stranger Paths (1897, an anthology)

Christmas! (1897)

In the Realm of the Silver Lion I (1898)

In the Realm of the Silver Lion II (1898)

Beyond (1899)

May's *oeuvre* includes some shorter travel stories that were not published within this series (for example, *Eine Befreiung in Die Rose von Kairwan*, 1894). After the founding of the Karl May Press in 1913, works in *Gesammelte Werke* were revised (sometimes extensively) and many received new titles. Texts (other than those from Fehsenfeld Press) were also added to the new series.

Stories for young readers^[edit]



Cover of *Der blaurote Methusalem* by [Oskar Herrfurth](#)

These stories were written from 1887 to 1897 for the magazine *Der Gute Kamerad*. Most of the stories are set in the [Wild West](#), but Old Shatterhand is just a figure and not the first-person narrator as he is in the travel stories. The best-known volume is *Der Schatz im Silbersee*. In the broadest sense, the early works *Im fernen Westen* and *Der Waldläufer* belong in this category.

The Bear Hunter's Son (1887, since 1890 within Heroes of the West)

The Spirit of the Llano estakata (1888, since 1890 correctly titled as The Spirit of the Llano estakado within The Heroes of the West)

Kong-Kheou, The Word of Honor (1888/89, since 1892 titled The Blue-Red Methuselah)

The Slave Caravan (1890)

The Treasure in Silver Lake (1891)

The Legacy of the Inca (1892)

The Oil Prince (1894, since 1905 titled as The Oil Prince)

The Black Mustang (1897)

Replies to letters from readers in The Good Comrade.

Mature work^[edit]



Ardistan und Dschinnistan, 1909, cover by [Sascha Schneider](#) showing [Marah Durimeh](#)

May's mature work dates to 1900, after his travels to the East.^[13] Many of them were published by Fehsenfeld.

Heavenly Thoughts (1900, poem collection)

In the Realm of the Silver Lion III (1902)

Erzgebirge village stories (1903, anthology)

In the Realm of the Silver Lion IV (1903)

And peace on earth! (1904)

Babel and the Bible (1906, drama)

Ardistan and Jinnistan I (1909)

Ardistan and Jinnistan II (1909)

Winnetou IV (1910)

My life and quest (1910, autobiography)

Shamah (1907) and other short stories.

Letters on Art (1907) and other articles.

"Karl May as Educator" and "The Truth About Karl May" or The Opponents of Karl May in Their Own Light (1902) and other legal proceedings.

Other works

May was a member of the "Lyra" choir in about 1864 and composed musical works, including a version of Ave Maria and Vergiss mich nicht within Ernste Klänge, 1899.^[14]

During his last years, May lectured on his philosophical ideas.

Three Human Questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? (Lawrence, 1908)

Sitara, the Land of the Human Soul (Augsburg, 1909)

Up into the realm of nobles (Vienna, 1912)

Furthermore, there are posthumous publications of fragments of stories and dramas, lyrics, musical compositions, letters and the library catalog.

Reception^[edit]

Number of copies and translations^[edit]

According to an encyclopedia dedicated to May, he is the "most read writer of the German tongue". The total number of copies published is about 200 million, half of them in German.^[15]

May's first translated work is considered to have been the first half of the *Orient Cycle* into a French [daily](#) in 1881.^[16] Recently, it was discovered, and confirmed by Hans Dieter Steinmet (Karl May Museum) that [Croatian](#) writer [Nikola Tordinac](#) published a translation of May's novel *Tree carde monte* in the magazine *Sriemski Hrvat* in 1880.^[17] Tordinac's translation became a part of the permanent exhibition of the Karl May Museum in 2017.^[17] Since that time, May's work has been translated into more than 30 languages, including [Latin](#) and [Esperanto](#). In the 1960s, [UNESCO](#) indicated that May was the most frequently translated German writer.^[15] His most popular translations are in [Bulgarian](#), [Czech](#), [Hungarian](#) and Dutch.^[16] Seabury Press, New York, began publishing English translations by Michael Shaw in 1977.^[18] In 2001, Nemsi Books Publishing Company, [Pierpont, South Dakota](#), was one of the first English publishing houses to produce the unabridged translations of May's *oeuvre*.

Influence^[edit]

May had a substantial influence on a number of well-known German-speaking people and on the German population itself.^[19] The popularity of his writing, and his (generally German) protagonists, are seen as having filled a lack in the German psyche, which had few popular heroes until the 19th

century.^[20] His readers longed to escape from an industrialised, capitalist society, an escape which May offered.^[21] May "helped shape the collective German dream of feats far beyond middle-class bounds."^[20] and contributed to the [popular image of Native Americans in German-speaking countries](#), which has been described by many as racist and harmful.^[22]

The name *Winnetou* has an entry in the German dictionary, [Duden](#). The wider influence on the populace also surprised US occupation troops after World War II, who realised that thanks to May, "Cowboys and Indians" were familiar concepts to local children (though fantastic and removed from reality).^[19]

Many well-known German-speaking people used May's heroes as models in their childhood.^[23] [Albert Einstein](#) enjoyed May's books and said, "My whole adolescence stood under his sign. Indeed, even today, he has been dear to me in many a desperate hour..."^[20]

May as an influence on the Nazis[\[edit\]](#)

[Adolf Hitler](#) was an admirer, who noted in *Mein Kampf* that the novels "overwhelmed" him as a boy, going as far as to ensure "a noticeable decline" in his school grades. According to an anonymous friend, Hitler attended the lecture given by May in Vienna in March 1912 and was enthusiastic about the event.^[24] Ironically, the lecture was an appeal for peace, also heard by [Nobel Peace Prize](#) laureate [Bertha von Suttner](#). May died suddenly only ten days after the lecture, leaving the young Hitler deeply upset.^[25] [Claus Roxin](#) noted that he doubts the anonymous description, because Hitler had said much about May, but not that he had seen him.^[26] Hitler defended May against critics in the men's hostel where he lived in Vienna, as the evidence of May's earlier time in jail had come to light; although it was true, Hitler confessed that May had never visited the sites of his American adventure stories. This made him a greater writer in Hitler's view since it showed the author's powers of imagination.

Hitler later recommended the books to his generals and had special editions distributed to soldiers at the front, praising *Winnetou* as an example of "tactical finesse and circumspection",^[27] though some note that the latter claims of using the books as military guidance are not substantiated.^[20] However, as told by [Albert Speer](#), "when faced by seemingly hopeless situations, he [Hitler] would still reach for these stories," because "they gave him courage like works of philosophy for others or the Bible for elderly people."^[27] Hitler's admiration for May led the German writer [Klaus Mann](#) to accuse May of having been a form of "mentor" for Hitler.^[19] In his admiration, Hitler ignored May's Christian and humanitarian approach and views completely, not mentioning his relatively sympathetic description of Jews and other persons of non-Northern European ancestry.

The fate of Native Americans in the United States was used during the world wars for anti-American propaganda.^[28] The [National Socialists](#) in particular tried to use May's popularity and his work for their purposes.^[20]

Indianertümelei[\[edit\]](#)

The popularity of May's books sparked a fascination in German popular culture with the Indians of North America that continues to this day. In 1985, the German scholar Hartmut Lutz invented the term *Deutsche Indianertümelei* ("German Indian Enthusiasm") for the phenomenon.^[29] The phrase *Indianertümelei* is a reference to the German term *Deuschtümelei* ("German Enthusiasm") which mockingly describes the phenomenon of celebrating in an excessively nationalistic and romanticized manner *Deushtum* ("Germanness").^[29] In the English-speaking world, the phenomenon of the German obsession with the First Nations of North America is known as "Indianthusiasm".^[29] In a 1999 speech delivered in the United States in English, Lutz declared:

For over two hundred years Germans have found *Indianer* so fascinating that even today an Indian iconography is used in advertising. The most popular image of the *Indianer* is provided by Karl May's fictional Apache chief *Winnetou*...Indian lore is profitable and marketable, as some Native Americans travelling in Germany may attest...There is a marked Indian presence in German everyday culture,

even down to the linguistic level, where sentences like *ein Indianer weint nicht* (an Indian doesn't cry), *ein Indianer kennt keinen Schmerz* (an Indian braves pain) or figures such as *der letzte Mohikaner* (the Last of the Mohicans) have become part of the everyday speech.^[30]

As part of the phenomenon of *Indianertümelei* a number of Western and Indian theme parks operate in Germany, the most popular of which are the Pullman City theme park outside of Munich and El Dorado theme park outside of Berlin.^[31] May's books also inspired hobbyist clubs, where Germans pretend to be cowboys or Indians, the first of which was the Cowboy Club founded in Munich in 1913.^[31] In 2019, it was estimated that between 40,000 and 100,000 Germans are involved in *Indianer* hobbyist clubs at any given moment.^[31] Interviewed in 2007, one member of an *Indianer* club stated: "Our camp is always in summer, in July for two weeks. During this time, we live in tipis, we wear only Indian clothes. We don't use technology and we try to follow Indian traditions. We have those [pretending to be] Lakota, Oglala, Blackfeet, Blood, Siksika, Pawnee...and we go on the warpath against each other day and night, anytime at all. In two weeks, every tribe can fight each other. We don't know when somebody will attack or when they will come to steal our horses. And the battles are always exciting, too. I really enjoy them".^[32]

Influence on other authors^[edit]

The German writer [Carl Zuckmayer](#) was intrigued by May's Apache chief and named his daughter *Maria Winnetou*.^[15] [Max von der Grün](#) said he read May as a young boy. When asked whether reading May's books had given him anything, he answered, "No. It took something away from me. The fear of bulky books, that is."^[33] [Heinz Werner Höber](#), the twofold [Glauser](#) prize winner, was a follower of May. He said, "When I was about 12 years old I wrote my first novel on Native Americans which was, of course, from the beginning to the end completely stolen from Karl May." He had pleaded with friends to get him to Radebeul "because Radebeul meant Karl May". There, he was deeply impressed by the museum and said, "My great fellow countryman from Hohenstein-Ernstthal and his immortal heroes have never left me ever since."^[34]

Legacy^[edit]

[Asteroid 15728 Karlmay](#) is named in May's honour.^[35]

Adaptations^[edit]

Main article: [Karl May film adaptations](#)

May's poem *Ave Maria* (1896) was set to music in at least 19 versions. Other poems, especially from the collection *Himmelsgedanken* were also set to music. [Carl Ball](#) wrote *Harp Clangs* for the drama *Babel und Bibel* for May. The Swiss composer [Othmar Schoeck](#) adapted *Der Schatz im Silbersee* for opera. May's concepts, such as Winnetou's death, inspired musical works.^[36]

The first stage adaptation of May's work was *Winnetou* (1919) by [Hermann Dimmler](#). Dimmler and [Ludwig Körner](#) made revised editions of the play. Different novel revisions have been played on outdoor stages since the 1940s. The [Karl May Festival in Bad Segeberg](#) has been held every summer since 1952 and in [Lennestadt-Elspe](#) since 1958. At some of these festivals, [Pierre Brice](#) has played Winnetou. Another festival has been conducted on a rock stage in [Rathen](#), in [Saxon Switzerland](#) near Radebeul in 1940 and then since 1984.^[37]

In 1920, May's friend [Marie Luise Droop](#), her husband [Adolf Droop](#) and the [Karl May Press](#) founded Ustade-Film, a [production company](#). Ustade-Film made three [silent movies](#) (*Auf den Trümmern des Paradieses*, *Die Todeskarawane* and *Die Teufelsanbeter*) after the *Orientcycle*. The company became bankrupt in 1921 and the films are lost.^[15] In 1936 a first [sound movie](#) *Durch die Wüste* was shown. *Die Sklavenkarawane* ^[de] (1958) and its sequel *Der Löwe von Babylon* ^[de] (1959) were the first colour movies.

From 1962 to 1968, a series of May movies were made.^[38] While most of the seventeen movies of this series were [Wild West movies](#) (beginning with *Der Schatz im Silbersee*), three were based on the *Orientcycle* and two on *Das Waldröschen*. Most of these movies were made separately by the two competitors [Horst Wendlandt](#) and [Artur Brauner](#). Several actors were employed, including [Lex Barker](#) (Old Shatterhand, Kara Ben Nemsî, Karl Sternau), [Pierre Brice](#) (Winnetou), [Gojko Mitić](#) (Winnetou), [Stewart Granger](#) (Old Surehand), [Milan Srdoč](#) (Old Wabble) and [Ralf Wolter](#) (Sam Hawkens, Hadschi Halef Omar, André Hasenpfeffer). The [film score](#) by [Martin Böttcher](#) and the landscape of [Yugoslavia](#) are associated with the movies. Other movies such as *Die Spur führt zum Silbersee* (1990) and TV productions such as *Das Buschgespenst* (1986) and the television series *Kara Ben Nemsî Effendi* (1973) were produced. The productions vary from the original written works.^[38]

In 2016, German RTL Television premiered three-part television movies based on Winnetou, directed by [Philipp Stölzl](#).^[39] In the part "Winnetou and Old Shatterhand", [Gojko Mitić](#), one of the actors who played Winnetou in the '60s movies, portrayed a character named Intschu Tschuna.

May's works (about 300) have been adapted for [audio dramas](#), particularly in the 1960s.^{[15][40]} The first, *Der Schatz im Silbersee*, was written by [Günther Bibo](#) in 1929.^[15] There are also Czech and Danish versions of the audio dramas.^[40] In 1988, *Der Schatz im Silbersee* was read by [Gert Westphal](#) and published as an [audiobook](#). *Wann sehe ich dich wieder, du lieber, lieber Winnetou?* (1995) is a compendium of Karl May texts read by [Hermann Wiedenroth](#).^[40]

In the 1950s [Croatian comic book artist Walter Neugebauer](#) finished his 1930s comic book adaptation of Karl May's stories.^[41] [Serbian](#) artist [Aleksandar Hecl](#) also drew one.^[42] In the 1960s and 1970s, May's works were adapted for German comics including an eight-issue series based on *Winnetou* and a further nine-issue series titled *Karl May* (1963–1965). The series was drawn by [Helmut Nickel](#) and [Harry Ehrh](#) and published by Walter Lehning Verlag. Belgian comics artist [Willy Vandersteen](#) created a whole series of comics based on May's stories, simply titled *Karl May* (1962–1977).^[43] Eighty-seven issues of *Karl May* were published by [Standaard Uitgeverij](#) from 1962 to 1987. Comics based on May's novels were also produced in [Czechoslovakia](#), Denmark, France, [Mexico](#), Spain and Sweden.^[44]

May's life has been the subject of screen works, novels and a stage play, including

- *Freispruch für Old Shatterhand* (1965, directed by Hans Heinrich)
- *Karl May* (1974, directed by [Hans-Jürgen Syberberg](#))
- *Karl May* (1992, directed by [Klaus Überall](#), a television series in 8 episodes)
- *Swallow, mein wackerer Mustang* (1980) by [Erich Loest](#)
- *Vom Wunsch, Indianer zu werden. Wie [Franz Kafka](#) Karl May traf und trotzdem nicht in Amerika landete* (1994) by [Peter Henisch](#)
- *Old Shatterhand in Moabit* (1994) by [Walter Püschel](#)
- *Karl May und der Wettermacher* (2001) by [Jürgen Heinzerling](#)
- *Die Taschenuhr des Anderen* by [Willi Olbrich](#).

Copies, parodies, and sequels^[edit]

May was [copied](#) or [parodied](#) during his lifetime. Some wrote similar Wild West stories. Others, such as [Franz Treller](#), published under May's name.^[45] Novelizations of May's characters include

- *Hadschi Halef Omar* (2010) [Jörg Kastner](#) describes the first contact of the titular character with Kara Ben Nemsî.
- *In Mekka* (1923) [Franz Kandolf](#), a sequel to *Am Jenseits* (*Karl May's Gesammelte Werke* volume 50).
- "Die Schatten des Schah-in-Schah" (2006) [Heinz Grill](#), an alternative to *Im Reiche des silbernen Löwen III/IV*.

- *Winnetous Testament* [Jutta Laroche](#) and [Reinhard Marheinecke](#), a series of eight volumes as a sequel to *Winnetou IV*.
- *Der Schuh des Manitu* (2001) [Michael Herbig](#), a parody on the Karl May films of the 1960s.

Karl May institutions^[edit]

Karl May Foundation^[edit]

In his will, May made his second wife, Klara, his sole heiress. He instructed that after her death all of his property and any future earnings from his work should go to a [foundation](#). This foundation should support the education of the gifted poor including writers, journalists, and editors. One year after May's death, on 5 March 1913, Klara May established the "Karl May Foundation" ("Karl-May-Stiftung"). Contributions have been made since 1917. Klara and Karl May's estate went to the foundation. The foundation established the [Karl May Museum](#) to maintain the Villa Shatterhand, the estates, the collections and May's tomb.^{[46][47]} In 1960, the Karl May Foundation received the Karl May Press.^[47]

Karl May Press^[edit]

On 1 July 1913, Klara May, Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld (May's main publisher) and the [jurist](#) Euchar Albrecht Schmid established the "Foundation Press Fehsenfeld & Co." ("Stiftungs-Verlag Fehsenfeld & Co.") in Radebeul. In 1915, the name changed to "Karl May Press" ("Karl-May-Verlag" (KMV)). The KMV consolidated the rights to May's works from internal discord and from other publishers.^[48] Third-hand revisions of these texts were added to the series *Karl May's Gesammelte Reiseerzählungen*, which was renamed to *Karl May's Gesammelte Werke (und Briefe)*. The existing 33 volumes of the original series were also revised, some extensively. By 1945 there were 65 volumes. The press is exclusive to May's work and subsidiary literature. Besides the *Gesammelte Werke* (the classical "green volumes"), which have 91 volumes today, the press has a huge reprint programme.

The Karl May Press aims to rehabilitate May from literary criticism and to support the Karl May Foundation. In 1921, Fehsenfeld left and in 1960, the foundation fell to Klara May's estate, and thus the Press is owned by the Schmid family. In 1959, due to censorship in the [Soviet occupation zone](#) and [East Germany](#), the Press moved to [Bamberg](#) (Germany). In 1963, when copyright ended, the Press began commercialising May's works. After [German reunification](#), in 1996, the Press took a second office in Radebeul. The name "Karl May" is a [registered trade mark](#) of the "Karl May Verwaltungs- und Vertriebs-GmbH", which belongs to the Karl May Press.^[48]

Museums^[edit]

Radebeul^[edit]



May's Villa Shatterhand



Villa Bärenfett

The [Karl May Museum](#) is in the Villa Shatterhand in Radebeul and contains artifacts from May's life as well as from life on the [American frontier](#) and [Native American](#) life of that era.^[49] It was founded in 1928 by May's widow and an eccentric Austrian named [Ernst Tobis](#).^[50] When the [Nazis](#) took over Germany, they appropriated the museum and the image of May, and were especially focused on swastikas that appeared in some of the Native American artwork. Hitler Youth were encouraged to visit the museum and hear stories from Tobis.^[51] After World War II, the original museum remained in [East Germany](#) and a replica was built in [Bamberg](#) in [West Germany](#).^{[52]:73} From 1956 to 1984, the museum in Radebeul was called the "Indianer Museum", because May's books were suppressed by the East German government; its original name was restored in 1986.^[49] Around 2010, controversy arose over [scalps](#), some of them from Native Americans, that were in the museum's collection.^[50]

Hohenstein-Ernstthal^[edit]

The "Karl May House" ("Karl-May-Haus") is the three-centuries-old [weaver house](#) where May was born. Since 12 March 1985, it has been a memorial and museum. It shows an original weaving room and non-German book editions. The garden has been arranged according to May's description in his memoirs.

Opposite the house is the International Karl May Heritage Center ("Karl-May-Begegnungsstätte"), which is used for events and special exhibitions. In [Hohenstein-Ernstthal](#), called "Karl May Home Town" since 1992, every May-related place has a [commemorative plaque](#). These places are connected by a "Karl May Path" ("Karl-May-Wanderweg"). Outside the city lies the "Karl May Cave" ("Karl-May-Höhle"), where May found shelter during his criminal times.^[53]

Societies^[edit]

In the 1890s, there were Karl May clubs.^[54] Today, various entities focus on research about the author.^[55] These organisations exist in German-speaking regions, the Netherlands, Australia and [Indonesia](#). While such societies are responsible for the release of most May-related periodicals, for example, *Der Beobachter an der Elbe*, *Karl-May-Haus Information*, *Wiener Karl-May-Brief*, and *Karl May in Leipzig*, the magazine *Karl May & Co.* is published independently.

The "Karl May Society" (KMG), founded on 22 March 1969, is the largest organisation, with approximately 1800 members.^[56] The KMG publishes *Jahrbuch*, *Mitteilungen*, *Sonderhefte der Karl-May-Gesellschaft*, and *KMG-Nachrichten* and reprints. Since 2008 and in cooperation with the Karl May Foundation and the Karl May Press, the KMG has published the [critiqued edition](#) of "Karl Mays Werke". This project was initiated by [Hans Wollschläger](#) and Hermann Wiedenroth in 1987.^{[12][57]}

Авторът на "Винету" бил "гениален мошеник" и започва да пише в затвора

180 години от рождението на Карл Май

АВТОР : [ЕМИ МАРИЯНСКА](#) / 28 ФЕВРУАРИ 2022 / 19:57
[КОМЕНТАРА](#)

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Посетители разглеждат диарама с индианци, вдъхновена от поредицата „Дивият запад“ на Карл Май в музея му, 2017 г. в Радебойл, Германия / Снимка: Getty Images

Сигурно няма момче, чието въображение да не е пораждало желанието да бъде като героите на Карл Май. Той е всепризнатият майстор на приключенския роман и уестърна. Автор е на десетки романи за индианци, сред които са завладяващите образи на Винету и Поразяващата ръка.

Творчеството на Карл Май е любимо четиво за мнозина. Романите му са преведени на над 40 езика, и са издадени в тираж от над 200 милиона броя, главно в Европа.

След почитателите на писателя са знаменитости като Айнщайн, който казва:

"Повечето приключенски книги, които съм чел, са ми доскучавали, но никога и книгите на Карл Май." Вероятно провокирани от силата и мъжеството на героите на Май, негови почитатели са били и немски политици - от Хитлер до Хелмут Хол.

На 25-и февруари т.г. се навършиха 180 години от рождението на немския писател и поет Карл Май.



Карл Май, януари 1910 г. / Снимка: Getty Images

Този забележителен майстор на живото слово е роден в Кралство Саксония, като петото дете на беден многодетен тъкач. Гладът бил постоянен спътник на детството му. Като съвсем малък ослепява от недохранване, но слава Богу, когато е на 4, по молба на майка му един лекар се заема с лечението му и успява да възстанови зрението му. Девет от братята и сестрите му умират още в детска възраст.

Огромно значение за възпитанието на малкия Карл изиграли неговата баба Йохане, която била зебелжителна жена, и кръстникът му - Кристиан Вайспфлог Кречмар - майстор ковач. И двамата били пълни с приказки и истории, които разказвали на момченцето. Ковачът имал и дар слово и понеже на младини обиколил доста страни, разказвал на Карл за тях и хората, които живеят там. Според самия писател, именно в този период на детство в слепота, се развило въображението му.



Ян Сосниок, в ролята на Винету, на фоторепетицията на "Im Tal des Todes" на Karl-May-Spiele в Летния театър "Am Kalkberg" на 19 юни 2015 г. в Бад Зегеберг, Германия / Снимка: Getty Images

Още



"Немският Леонардо да Винчи" бил погребан без почести

Писателят израства в голяма бедност, но баща му бил взискателен до жестокост човек по отношение на образованието му. Искал синът му да се ограмоти, да работи и да стане богат човек. Бащата изисквал от малкия Карл да преписва цели страници от различни енциклопедии по естествознание, молитвеници и справочници. Ако момчето не успеело да се справи, било наказвано с бой с пръчки, или камшик. Макар и да ни изглежда жестоко, по-късно самият писател оценява това като полезно за неговото интелектуално израстване.

Още като ученик той научил наизуст съдържанието на книга по география и можел по памет да говори за много страни толкова описателно, сякаш е бил там.



Актьорите Патрик Л. Шмиц и Дирк Симпсън, на фотосесия на продукцията "Im Tal des Todes" на Karl-May-Spiele в Летния театър "Am Kalkberg" на 19 юни 2015 г. в Бад Зегеберг, Германия / Снимка: Getty Images

Още



Златните яйца на немския ювелир Питър Нибенгаус

Карл Май мечтаел да стане учител и да учи децата да не тръгват от бедност по лош път, но самият той не успял да стори това със себе си. Поради тежкото си детство, от съвсем млад попадал в различни ситуации, в които се спасявал чрез кражба, да оцелее и да си набави храна. Прибягвал и до дребни мошеничества по същата причина. Това не "пречело" на дълбоката му религиозност, защото имал своя максима: "Бог вижда къде има повече, отколкото е необходимо, и прощава на грешниците, които са посегнали към излишество!"

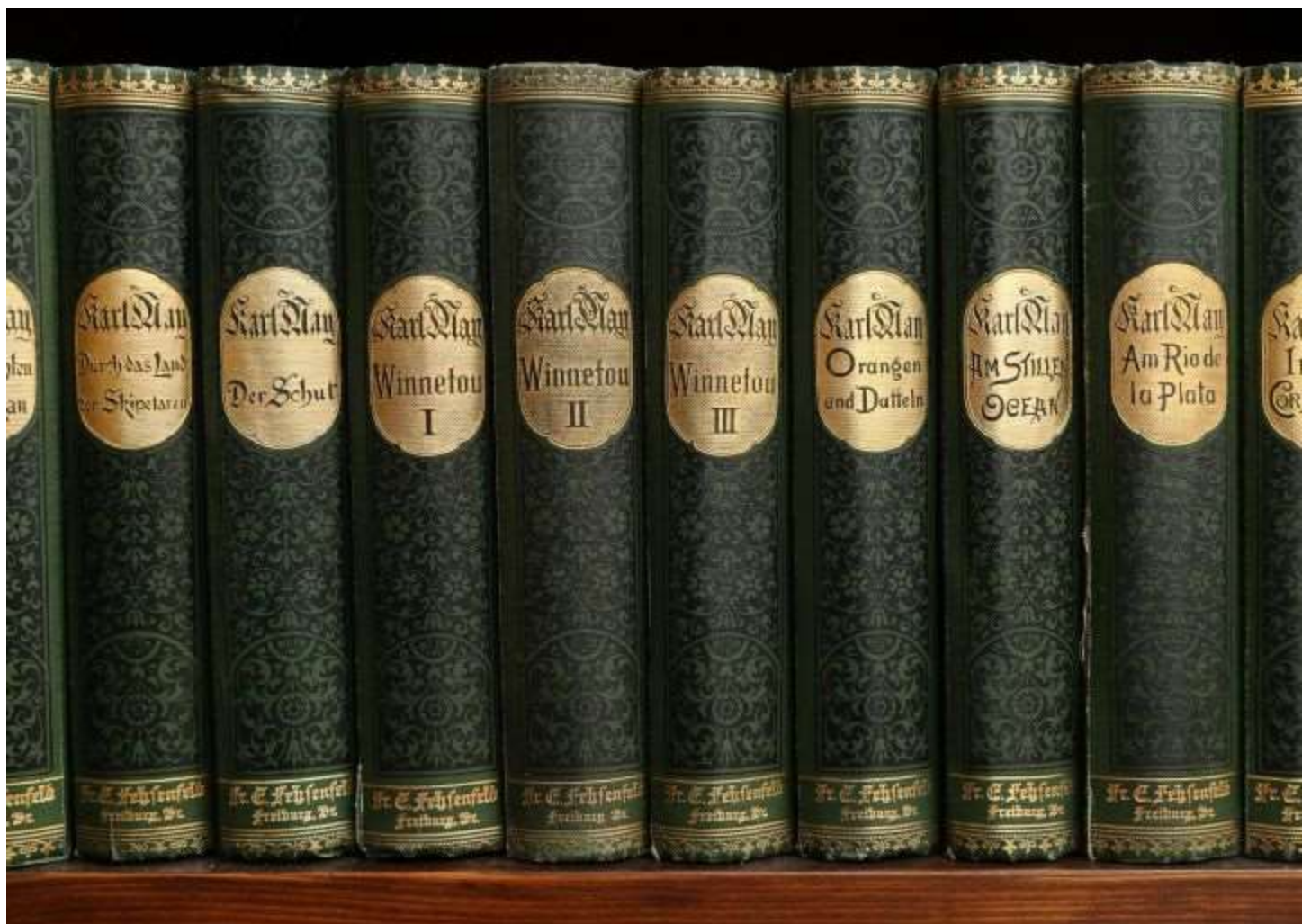
Още



"Баухаус" стана музей на годината в Германия

За първи път го хващат в кражба през 1859-а по време на Коледните празници. Откраднал коледни свещи от семинарията, където учи, за да ги занесе за празника вкъщи. Изключват го от училището. По-късно, когато вече работел като помощник-учител в един техникум, откраднал ръчен часовник, който продал и купил храна за домашните си. Хващат го и го осъждат на два месеца затвор. Лишават го и от правоспособност като учител. Търси си работа, но безуспешно. Открадва кожено палто, което залага срещу заем от 10 талера. Обявен бил за издирване и го осъждат на 4 години затвор.

Едва излязъл от затвора, участвал в сбиване. Когато го арестуват, излъгал полицаите, че е син на богат плантатор на име Ваденбах и идвал от остров Мартиника, а по време на пътуването, си изгубил документите. Когато разкриват самоличността му, отново бил осъден на затвор - този път в Цвикау. Там непрекъснато чете в килията си и за добро поведение бил "издигнат" в отговорник на библиотеката на затвора.



Ранните издания на поредицата "Дивият запад и Ориент" на немския писател Карл Май / Снимка: Getty Images
Всъщност, именно в затвора започва да пише.

Според някои биографи на Карл Май първият от успешните му проекти е "Горската роза". Според други - романът "Олд Файерхенд", който публикува, докато работи като редактор в Дрезден. След това под ръката му излизат общо над 80 тома с романи и стихове: "Винету", "Съкровището в сребърното езеро", "Капитан Кайман", "Завещанието на инката", "Кралят на петрола", "Черният мустанг", "Край Рио де ла Плата", "Олд Шетърхенд", "Горски призрак", "През пустинята", "Синът на ловеца на мечки", "Призрака на Ляно Естакадо", цикъла романи "Под сянката на падишаха", "Князът на бледоликите", "Отчето-нож" и др.



Ранните издания на приключенските романи на Карл Май в оригиналната му библиотека в музея / Снимка: Getty Images

В много от романите му главно действащо лице е първият му герой - Олд Шетърхенд, познат като Поразящата ръка. Много критици се питат, на какво се дължи магическото въздействие на повествованието в романите на Карл Май? - Според някои причината е проста - че винаги разказва събитията от първо лице, което го превръща от разказвач, в събеседник на читателите.

Те го възприемат като близък човек, който им разказва "своя" история.



Оригинален ръкопис на писателя, изложен в неговия Дом-музей / Снимка: Getty Images

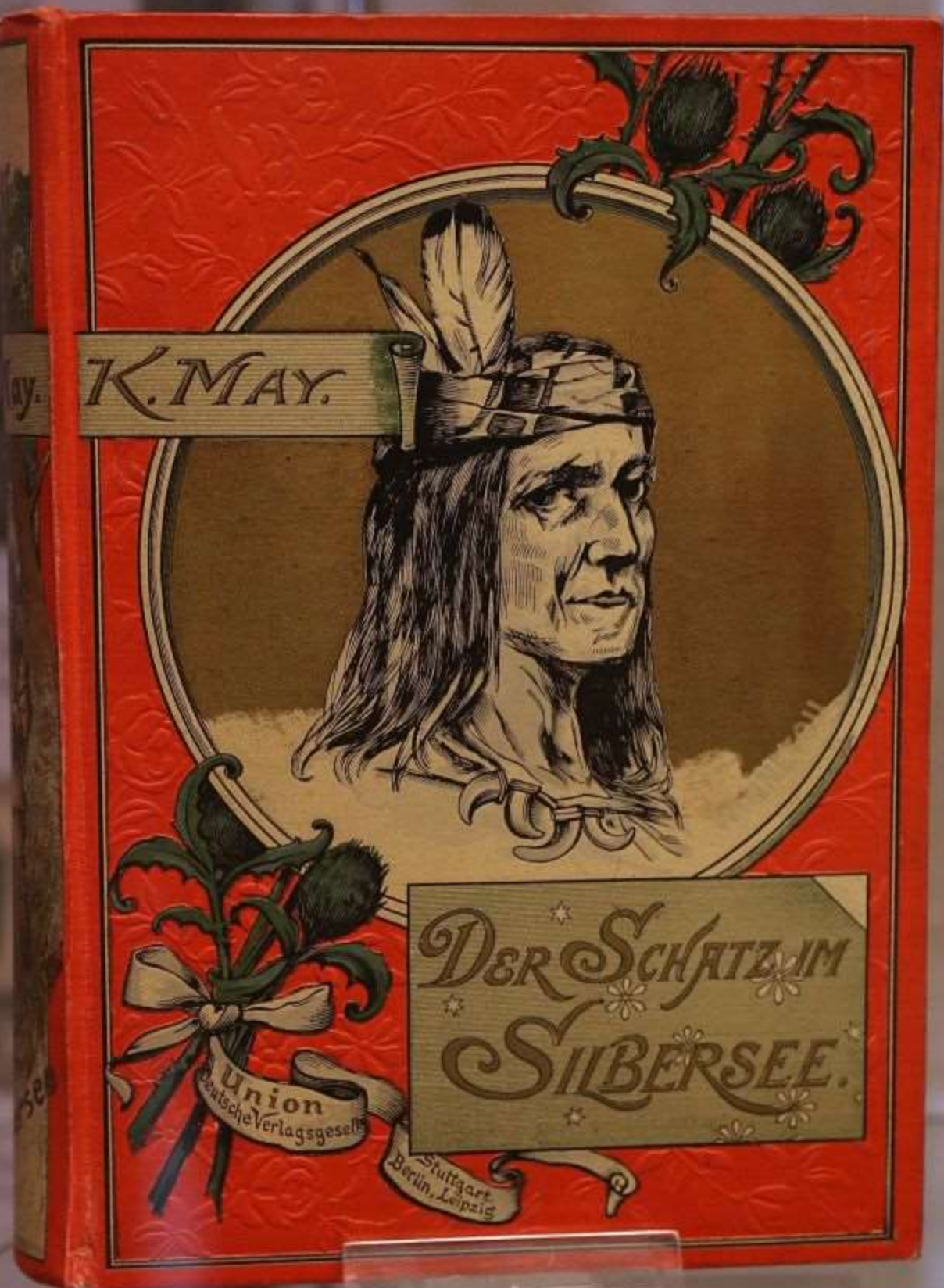
Още



Мексико си върна 34 археологически артефакта от Германия

Немските критици отбелязват с гордост и още нещо, което е важно за тях: Карл Май е невероятен патриот на родината си. Когато описва история в Ориента, главният герой се казва Кара бен Немзи, но в превод името означава Карл, син на Германия. Ако ли пък действието се развива в Америка, то положителните герои задължително са немци, а отрицателните - янки. И затова си има причина: Карл Май изпитвал слабост към

потисканите и онеправданите, а в Америка това са индианците и негрите. Но не към всички изпитвал такова състрадание. Както се казва, "във всяко стадо има и мърша", и за писателя сред индианските племена "лошите индианци" били тези от племената кайова и юта.



Ранно издание на "Der Schatz am Silbersee" ("Съкровището на Сребърното езеро")
от Карл Май / Снимка: Getty Images

Още



Германия ще започне да връща конфискуваните бенински скулптури на Нигерия от 2022 г.

От романите му научаваме много за живота на тези интригуващи, изпълнени "странни хора с пера", както и за техния "отживял, но силен морал"; за мъжеството и доблестта им, за воинските им умения и честта им. Все нравствени идеали, които Карл Май възпитава у младите сърца и умове по един интригуващ начин. И макар че той самият съвсем не претендирал да е пример на тези идеали, дълбоко в себе си бил религиозен и силно почитал християнския стремеж към Добро. В желанието си да възпита християнски морал дори у индианските си любимци, Карл Май "покръства" един племенен вожд в романа си "Винету".



Статуя на индианец пред Дома-музей на Карл Май в Радебойл, Германия / Снимка: Getty Images

Още



Германия е върнала 14 произведения на изкуството от колекцията на Гурлит, откраднати от евреи

И след като си припомнимме всичко това, идва ред на най-любопитното - Карл Май никога не е бил в Америка и не е стъпвал в Дивия запад преди 1908-а година, когато за кратко пътува до някои източни американски щати. Същото може да се каже и за

романите му за Ориента. Пътувал е до Китай, Цейлон и Суматра, но чак през 1900-та година. Така че всичко в книгите му за живота по тези места е плод на неговото въображение. Но то е толкова завладяващо и пълно с живи картини, че дори малките несъответствия в описанията на някои места, обичаи и ритуали от културата на героите му, са му простени от неговите почитатели. Увлекателният разказ кара читателите да се потопят в неговия чуден свят и да потърсят в него преди всичко красотата и дързостта, без да се вглеждат в детайлите. Карл Май винаги е бил интересен за нас, европейците, защото ни отвежда в непознати за нас географски ширини.

В Щатите, обаче, писателят далеч не е така популярен. Вероятно точно поради факта, че американците, за разлика от нас, по-отчетливо забелязват несъответствията в романите му, а много вероятно - и по исторически причини от известен характер.



Снимка на Карл Май, облечен като Олд Шатърхенд, един от главните герои на поредицата му романи / Снимка: Getty Images

Още



Уникалният Дяволски мост в Германия беше ремонтиран за 4 млн. евро

Някои вероятно ще попитат: Как така описва пътешествия, които никога не е правил?

Отговорът е, че макар и да не е бил по местата, които описва, Карл Май проучвал грижливо "географски книги, пътеписи и класически приключенски романи", пише биографът му Томас Крамер. Научил много за индианците от книгата "Дванадесет езика от югозападния край на Северна Америка". След това и самите му издатели си послужили с малка измама с рекламна цел, като разпространили мита, че Карл Май е "пътеписец".

Едно списание дори отива и по-далеч: "Авторът е обиколил всички места, в които се развива действието в приключенските му романи", написват там. И дори някои да се усъмнявали в точността на "пътеписите" му, Карл Май оставал любимият им автор, заради майсторското въображение и талантливото перо на писателя.



Библиотеката на Карл Май в дома му в Радебойл / Снимка: Getty Images

Още



Германия отбелязва 90-ия рожден ден на художника Герхард Рихтер с три изложби

Карл Май създава един толкова убедителен образ на индианеца като горд и смел мъж, способен да отстоява честта си с достойнство, че несъмнено този тип герой е бил идеал и на самия писател. След смъртта му дори къщата на Мей в Радебойл, била превърната в музей, посветен на индианците. Там именно могат да бъдат видяни сребърната карабина на Винету и карабината "Хенри", както и "мечкоубиеца" на Олд Шетърхенд.

Както вече споменахме, Карл Май не е бил толкова "идеален" в живота си, въпреки че очевидно е проявявал стремеж да се "поправи". Животът му е не по-малко интересен от разказите му. Някои го определят като "фантазьор, който умее да измисля истории", а други направо го наричат "мошеник". Последното се дължи на някои достигнали до нас биографични факти. А именно, че ако като малък крадял на дребно за храна, то като голям вече се пробвал и с по-сериозни измами.

Още



Романтичният и суров свят на индианците от края на 19 век

Веднъж се представил за учен лекар, пенсиониран от армията. Така се вживял в ролята си, че почнал дори да провежда "прегледи" и да изписва рецепти. След това се представил за един познат по име учител от семинарията, в която учел преди, и от негово име поръчал няколко кожени палта, които да му донесат за "проба" в един хотел. Докато се суеял, кое да си "избере", взел палтата и изчезнал, без да ги плати.



Актьорът Ралф Бауер (Old Firehand), на представянето на продукцията по Карл Май "Im Tal des Todes" в Open Air Theatre в Калкберг на 17 февруари 2015 г. в Хамбург, Германия / / Снимка: Getty Images

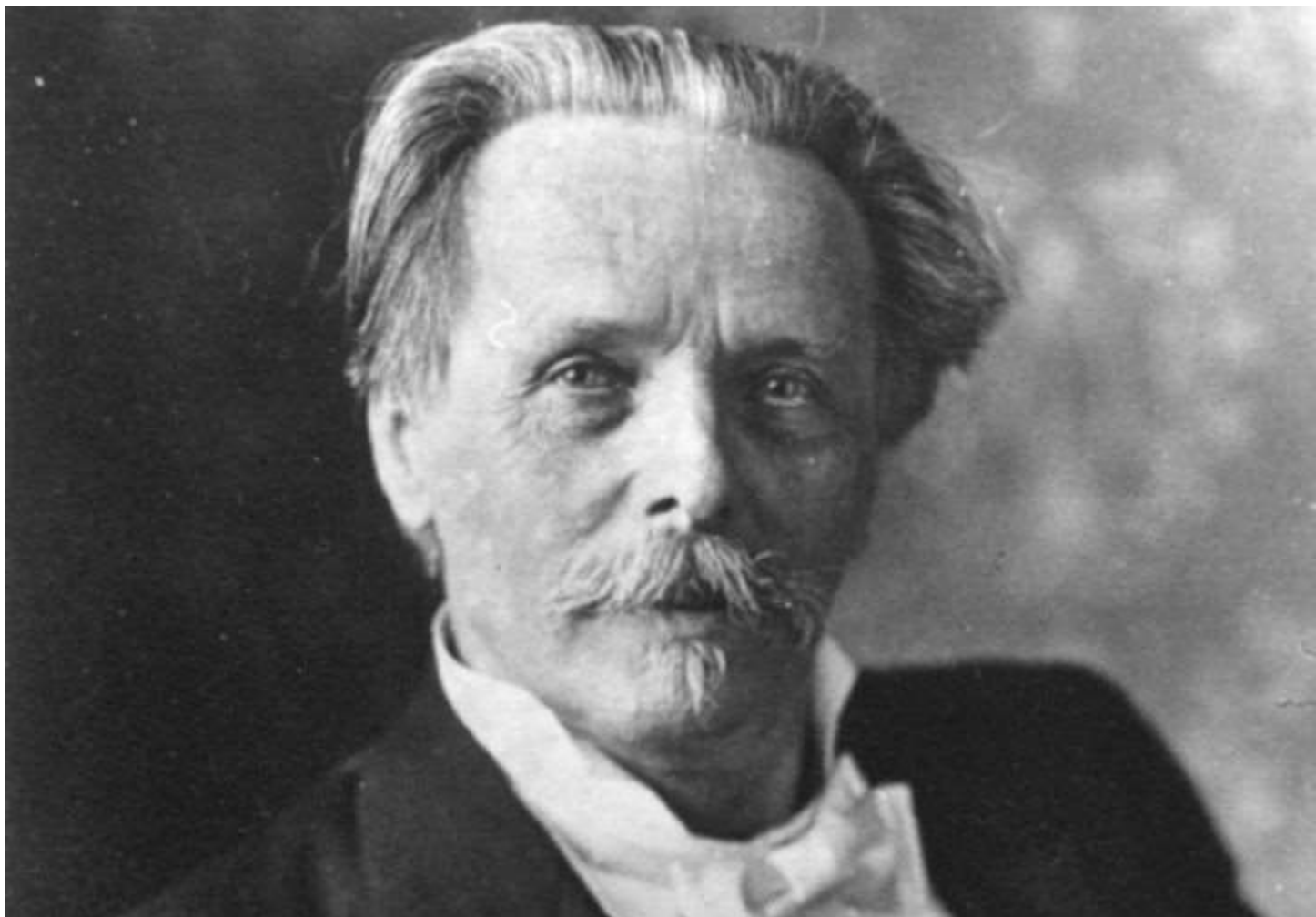
Още



"Майсторът и Маргарита" е най-предпочитаният роман от затворниците в Русия

Криминалните му житейски истории са и смешни, и ако трябва да сме честни - донякъде трогателни, защото всяка от тях е свързана с периоди на отчайващо безпаричие. Буквално на ръба на оцеляването си например, се представил за търговец на метали и отмъкнал кожено палто, за да го продаде и да се нахрани. После се представил за полицаи пред един магазинер в Лайпциг, и поискал човекът да му покаже банкнотите в касата на магазина си, защото трябвало да "провери" дали сред тях няма фалшиви. После поканил слияния магазинер да тръгне с него на "разпит" в полицията, но по пътя изчезнал с парите. Друг път се представил на един хлебар за адвокат и му съобщил, че човекът трябва да тръгне незабавно за Дрезден, за да получи някакво наследство. След като оня тръгнал, Карл Май отишъл при жена му и ѝ представил за полицаи, който разследва фалшиви пари. По същия начин като с предишния магазинер, прибрал почти цялата каса за "проверка".

По време на всички тези "подвизи", писателят като същински актьор се дегизирал с брада и мустаци, и чудесно изигравал ролята си, докато не го хванат.



Писателят Карл Май (1842-1912)

Макар и да не е съвсем прилично, но тези истории от живота на писателя са толкова забавни, че бъдат по-скоро смях, отколкото порицание. За някои дори го представят като симпатичен хулиган и "изобретателен гений". Така или иначе, личността на Карл Май не оставя никого безразличен. Образът му служи за подражание и на някои съвременни политици.

Още



Продават 30 картини, приписани на Хитлер

Що се отнася до това, откъде тръгва митът, че е бил любим автор на Хитлер, то това се случва през 1933-та година, когато един репортер бил допуснат да посети Фюрера в дома му, след което в един вестник излиза следното описание на кабинета на Хитлер: "На едната лавица има политически и държавнически съчинения, няколко брошури и книги за коне и развъждане на овчарско куче, а на другата лавица - млади хора, вижте само това! На тази лавица стоят всичките най-известни книги на Карл Май!"



Барелеф на писателя / Снимка: Getty Images

Някои почитатели на писателя раздухват тази история, като твърдят, че Хитлер дори давал на своите генерали примери от книгите на Карл Май, като им препоръчвал бойни тактики и хитрини, описани в тях.

В същото време, Карл Май е известен като пацифист. Особено в по-късните си произведения. "Така че, подчертава един от биографите на писателя, ако с Хитлер се познаваха, едва ли биха се харесали!"

Още



Джоан Роулинг стана Кавалер на честта

И до днес, според някои литературни критици, Карл Май е "най-четеният писател" в света, въпреки че подобен извод не може да се извади чрез надеждна статистика от времената преди интернет. Но като се има предвид огромното му творчество и тиражирането на романите му на толкова много езици, е много вероятно Карл Май да се подрежда на второ място след Джоан К. Роулинг, чиито истории за Хари Потър надминават тиража от над 450 милиона бройки по последна статистика.



Барбара Вусов (Сеньорита Миранда), на представянето на продукцията по

Карл Май "Im Tal des Todes" в Летния театър в Калкберг на 17 февруари 2015 г.
в Бад Зегеберг, Германия / Снимка: Getty Images

*Писателят умира на 30-и март 1912 г. на 70-годишна възраст в Радебойл, Германия.
Именно там се намира и музеят с оригинални издания на книгите му, скъпи вещи и
реликви на Карл Май.*

А знаете ли, че Карл Май е автор и на много "балкански истории"? - Именно той
създава представите на немците за нашия регион. И, както се полага да отбележим,
макар че и по нашите земи никога не е идвал, че да ни познава, за нас е чест.

Еми МАРИЯНСКА

List of books:

May - In the Balkan Gorges.fb2
May - Inca's Testament.fb2
May - Captain Cayman.fb2
May - On the Rio de la Plata.fb2
May - Collected works in 2 volumes. Volume 1.djvu
May - Collected works in 2 volumes. Volume 2.djvu
May - Bear hunter's son (Compilation).fb2
May - Through the desert.fb2
May - Through the desert, through the harem. Robert Surcouf (compilation).djvu

\Winnetu

May 01 Winnetou - Apache chief
May 01 Winnetu.fb2
May 01 Winnet (trans. Bezymensky).fb2
May 02 White brother Winnetou.fb2
May 03 Faithful Hand.fb2
May 04 Satan and Iscariot. Volume 1.fb2
May 04 Satan and Iscariot. Volume 2.fb2
May 05 Bear hunter's son.fb2
May 06 Spirit of Llano Estacado.fb2
May 07 Silver Lake Treasure.fb2
May 08 Oil Prince.fb2
May 09 Black Mustang.fb2
May 10 Gold Winnetu.fb2
May 11 Winnetou's heirs.fb2
May - Winnet. Books 1-9 (compilation)
May - In the Wild West.fb2

\Eastern cycle

May - Eastern cycle. Books 1-7 (compilation)
May 01 From Baghdad to Istanbul
May 02 In the Land of the Stiptars
May 03 Slave Caravan
May 04 Zhut
May 05 Wild Kurdistan
May 06 In the Pacific
May 07 Robert Surcouf (in the book Pirates, Privateers, Corsairs)
May 07 Robert Surcouf

\Karl May. Collected works in 15 volumes

Volume 01. Through the desert, through the harem. Robert Surcouf.fb2
Volume 02 and 03. Winnet. White brother Winnetou. Winnetu Gold.fb2
Volume 04 and 05. Faithful Hand (novel in three parts).fb2
Volume 06. Treasure of the Silver Lake.fb2
Volume 07. Slave caravan.fb2
Volume 08. Son of a bear hunter. Spirit of Llano Estacado.fb2
Volume 09. Wild Kurdistan. Captain Cayman.fb2
Volume 10. Will of the Inca.fb2
Volume 11. From Baghdad to Istanbul. On the Pacific. Stories.fb2
Volume 12 and 13. Satan and Iscariot (novel in three parts).fb2
Volume 14. Half-breed. Winnetou's heirs.fb2
Volume 15. On the Rio de la Plata.fb2